



## CHAPTER 4

### SAFE DRIVING RULES AND REGULATIONS

This chapter of your manual contains the rules which you must follow when operating any vehicle on roadways in New Jersey. The operator of a bicycle or MOPED must obey the same rules of the road as motorized traffic, and has the same rights and duties as an operator of any other motorized vehicles.



### Speed control

Speeding is a common cause of fatal accidents. You must always be aware of your speed when driving. Speed affects almost everything else that can happen to you in the car. When driving, it is a good idea to keep up with the flow of traffic at any legal speed. Keep enough distance from traffic around you so that you can stop safely when necessary.

New Jersey law sets top speed limits for any given road, street, highway or freeway.

#### New Jersey speed limits (unless otherwise posted)

25 mph	school zones, business or residential districts
35 mph	certain low density business and residential districts
50 mph	all other roadways
55 mph	certain state highways (as posted) and all interstates
65 mph	certain interstate highways (as posted)

Legislation for the 65 mph speed limit zones specifies that 400 miles of public highways in NJ are designated 65 mph; that a study determine the impact for permanence of 65 mph on those highways; and that drivers pay double fines for

driving 10 miles or more above the 65 mph limit. The double fines also apply to most moving violations committed in 65 mph speed zones.

You must never drive faster than is safe for the conditions, no matter what the posted speed limit. Judge your speed control by type of road, weather, and traffic. Drivers should slow down enough to see clearly and stop quickly in traffic. It is important to slow down:

- on narrow or winding roads;
- at intersections or railroad crossings;
- on hills;
- at sharp or blind curves;
- where there are pedestrians or driving hazards;
- when the road is wet or slippery.

If you cannot keep up with normal traffic because of car problems, pull off the road.

## Driving too slowly

While it is important to slow down when necessary, try to keep up with normal traffic flow. Many accidents are caused by driving too slowly and backing up traffic. When road surfaces and traffic are normal, New Jersey law prohibits you from blocking traffic by slow driving.



## Keep to the right

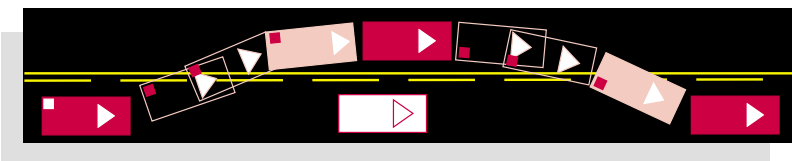
The laws of New Jersey require you to keep to the right, except when passing. You must drive on the right half of the roadway unless you are driving on a one-way street. You must drive a vehicle as close as possible to the right-hand edge or curb of the roadway, except when overtaking and passing another vehicle.

On a multi-lane roadway, you must drive in the lane nearest to the **right-hand edge or curb** of the roadway when the lane is available for travel, except when overtaking another vehicle or in preparation for a left turn.



## Passing

You should know the proper lane for normal driving and how to change lanes safely. The rules for passing depend on the type of road.



Stay to the right of the center lines. Passing is only safe when you can see far enough ahead to be sure there is no oncoming traffic. Watch for lane markings. If there are both solid and dashed center lines, you may only pass when the dashed line is on your side. You must complete the pass before reaching another solid line on your side. Do not pass when there is a solid line on your side. This is not only illegal, but very unsafe.

### **Pass only when safe**

In most cases you pass on the left. You may pass on the right on roads with more than one lane going in the same direction if vehicles on the roadway are moving in two or more substantially continuous lines, or when the driver ahead is making a left turn and there is room to pass. Do not pass on the right shoulder of the road. This is against the law. Some important rules about passing are listed below.

### **Do not pass**

- on a hill or a curve, or at any time you cannot see far enough ahead;
- at a street crossing or intersection;
- at a railroad crossing;
- on narrow bridges, or in underpasses, or tunnels;
- when a sign tells you not to pass or there is a solid yellow line on your side of the center line marking;
- when a vehicle in front of you has stopped to let a pedestrian cross.



### **Yielding the right of way**

Although there are laws which govern the right of way, you should always be prepared to yield. There are some basic rules which always apply. Yield to police cars, fire engines and ambulances when they are giving warning signs (sirens, flashing lights). Yield to pedestrians in crosswalks.

### **Controlled intersections**

An intersection is where two or more roads cross or merge at angles. It is controlled if there are traffic lights or signs in any direction. Obey the signals and signs. At a controlled intersection, there are conditions when you must yield:

- at a 4-way stop, yield to the driver on the right if you both get there at the same time or to the driver already stopped in the intersection;
- in the intersection, yield to the other driver who is already stopped;
- at the entrance to an intersection marked with a yield sign, slow down and yield to traffic on the main road or stop;
- at a traffic light when you want to turn left, yield to oncoming traffic and to pedestrians within the crosswalk.

**Note:** Driving on private property to avoid a traffic signal or sign is a motor vehicle violation.

## Uncontrolled intersections

When two or more roads join and there are no traffic signs, be extra careful. Keep watch ahead on both sides of the road for crossroads. Most of the time there will be a warning sign ahead. As you near a crossroad that is not controlled, be ready to stop if any traffic is coming from the right or left. A driver coming from a private road or driveway must yield to all traffic on the main road. (But you can never be sure that will occur.) As a general rule, the vehicle on the left should yield to the vehicle on the right.

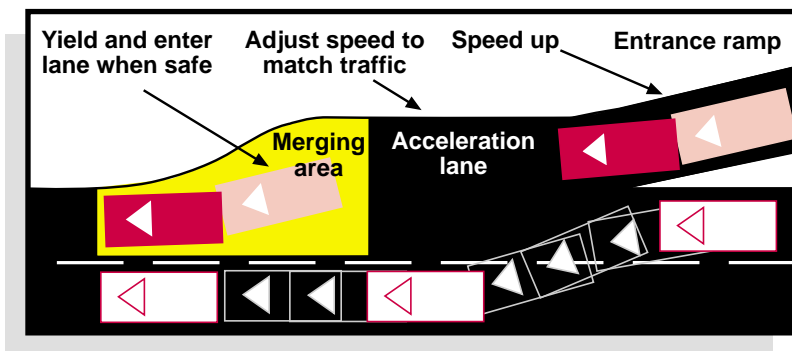
## Blind intersections

Buildings, parked cars, or bushes may obstruct a driver's line of sight. In the country, trees or crops may hide cross traffic. Slow down to allow time to check traffic. Stop if you have to.

## Entering highways, parkways and turnpikes

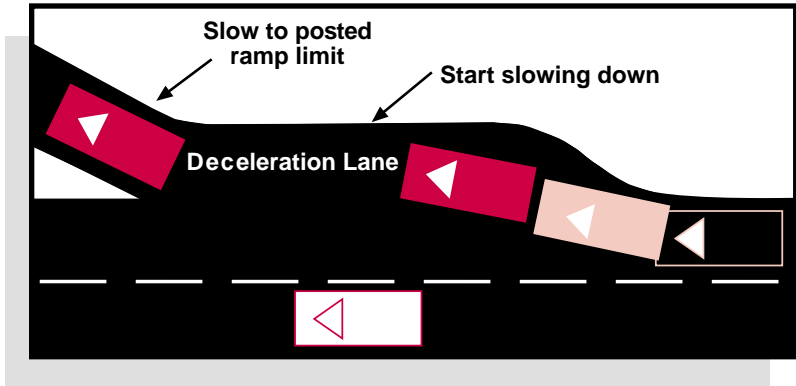
Highways, parkways and turnpikes are divided roads (usually multi-laned) with traffic flow only in one direction. There are no direct intersections. To help drivers enter a highway, acceleration (or speed up) lanes are used. These are extra lanes used to allow time for you to enter the highway and speed up to the flow of traffic. The driver must yield to traffic on the main road before moving into the proper lane. Keep the following points in mind when entering multi-laned highways.

- Watch for, and obey, the posted advisory speed limits (if any) at the entrance ramp.
- As you reach the acceleration lane, speed up to the flow of traffic.
- Before you reach the end of the acceleration lane, look for an opening in traffic on the main road. Try to avoid coming to a complete stop.
- Yield to traffic and enter the right-hand lane when safe.



## Leaving highways, parkways and turnpikes

In most cases the exits on highways are on the right. Watch for turnoff signs. When you near the exit there is usually an extra lane to the right. This is called a deceleration (or slow down) lane. Keep the following points in mind when leaving highways.

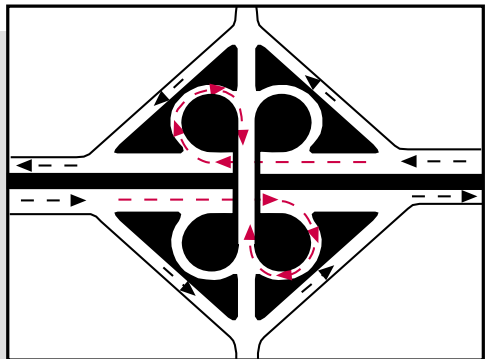


- When you begin to enter the deceleration lane for an exit, start slowing down.
- When you near the exit ramp, slow down to the posted advisory speed limit.
- Always be sure you are going slow enough to keep control of your car when there are curves or circles in the exit.

In cases where the exit is on the left, watch for signs that show the proper lane for turnoff.

## Interchanges (cloverleaves)

Divided highways are built for express traffic. To smooth traffic flow, there are usually no traffic lights or direct crossroads. To get on or off such an expressway you must often make a cloverleaf turn. Watch for entrance and exit signs. Drive slowly in the circle. Signs may be posted to show what speed is safe on the curve.





## Turning regulations

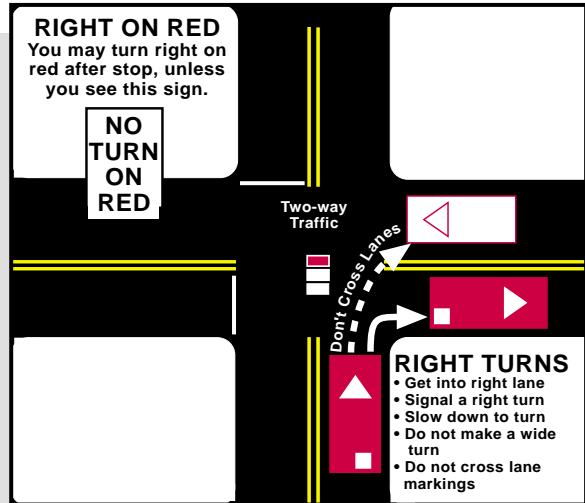
### Right turn on red

New Jersey law permits a right turn on a red light after a **full stop** unless there is a **No Turn On Red** sign. You must yield to all oncoming traffic and **pedestrians**. Be especially careful to look for less visible vehicles, such as bicycles and MOPEDS, crossing your path with the green light. Vehicle operators and pedestrians must be extremely careful.

The proper signals for stops and turns are covered in Chapter 5. Always use your turn signals at least 100 feet before making any turn. Be sure your signals are canceled after completing a turn.

### Right turns

Drive up to the turn as far to the right as possible. Keep close to the right curb or parked cars at the curb. Be sure that you do not swing into the wrong lane while making your turn.



### Left turns

**Left turns, two vehicles.** If you meet another driver at an intersection and both of you signal left turns, be extra careful. When safe, each driver should turn to the left of the center of the intersection.

**Left turn from one-way road into two-way road.** As you near the turn, get into the left lane. Make the turn to the left of the center of the intersection. After turning, keep to the right of the lane markings.

**Left turn from a one-way road into one-way road.** Approach the turn in the left lane. Turn into the left lane of the road you are entering.

**Left turn from two-way road into two-way road.** Approach the turn as close as possible to the center line of the road. In turning, do not cross lane markings. Keep to the right of the lane of the road you are entering.

**Left turns, between intersections.** Between intersections, solid lines show when not to pass. These lines may be crossed with care when entering or leaving driveways in business or residential areas.

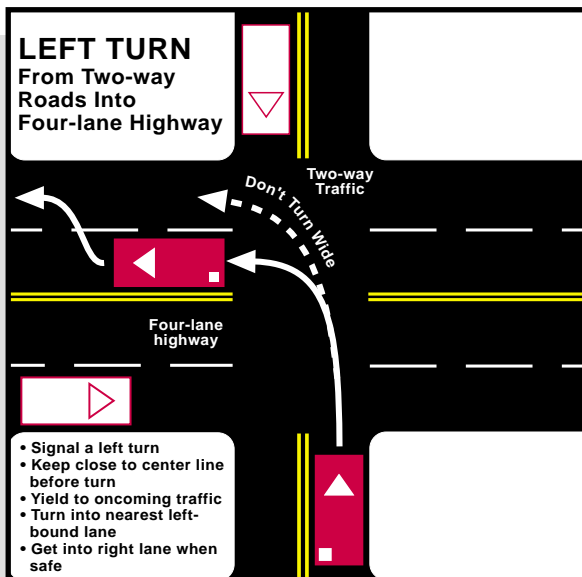
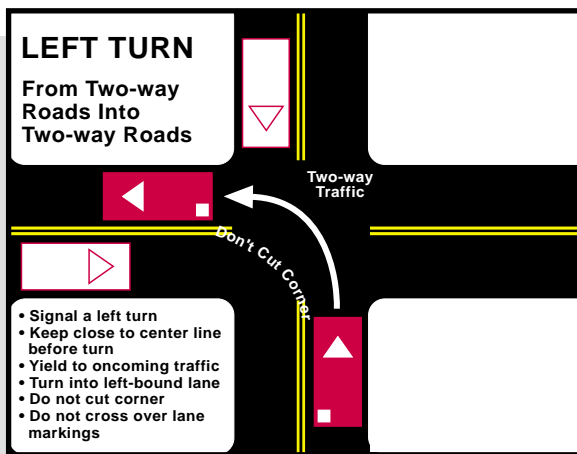
**Left turn from two-way road into four-lane highway.** Approach the turn as close to the center line

of the road as possible. Make the turn before reaching the center of the intersection. Be careful not to cross lane markings. Turn into the left lane of the road going in your direction. This is the passing lane of the four-lane highway. When traffic permits, move to the right, out of the passing lane.

## Circle intersections

There is no set rule for driving into and around a traffic circle in New Jersey. Common sense and caution must prevail at all times.

In most cases, the circle's historically established traffic flow pattern dictates who has the right of way. If a major highway flows into and through the circle, it usually dominates the traffic flow pattern and commands the right



of way. Traffic control signs, such as stop or yield signs, at the entrances to the circle also govern who has the right of way.

Whenever a motorist is in doubt concerning who has the right of way, the motorist should exercise extreme caution and remember the basic rule governing any uncontrolled intersection — the vehicle to the left shall yield the right of way to the vehicle approaching from the right.

Remember, never enter a circle without checking all signs and determining the intentions of the operators of any other vehicles already operating within the circle. Caution must be the guiding rule and the driver should never assume that he has the right of way.

## Stopping regulations

Signs, signals and traffic rules tell you when you have to stop. The following section highlights some of the important stopping regulations.

Do not try to beat a traffic light change. Even if the light is changing to green, be careful. There may be other vehicles coming through or still in the intersection. Most accidents at traffic signals happen in the first few seconds after the light has changed. When a yellow light follows a green light, get ready to stop. If the light changes while you are already in the intersection, go through with caution.

## When you must stop

- at an intersection with a stop sign;
- where there is a red light;\*
- where there is a flashing red light;
- when a traffic officer orders you to stop;\*\*
- when there is a yield sign and traffic on the through road is too close;
- when a school bus is picking up or letting off children and/or the red lights are flashing;
- when coming from an alley, private driveway, or building;
- at a bridge span which is about to open for boat traffic;
- for a blind pedestrian using a white or metallic colored walking cane, or a trained guide dog, or a guide dog instructor engaged in instructing a guide dog;
- at a railroad crossing;
- for a pedestrian in a crosswalk or at an intersection.

\* Do not speed through red lights; it is a fatal factor in driving (see pp. 109-10).

Come to a full stop and turn only where permitted after yielding to traffic and to pedestrians crossing on green (see p. 43).

\*\*The driver must comply with a police officer's request to illuminate the driver's compartment of the vehicle when stopped, or pay a \$50 fine.



## Stop at railroad crossings

Public highway railroad crossings are marked with one or more warning devices for your safety by both the NJ Department of Transportation and railroad companies. Some of these include advance warning signs; pavement markings in front of a crossing; flashing lights (often on crossbuck signs); and gates or gates and flashing lights.

Stop at least 15 feet from railroad crossings when there are flashing lights, bells or flag signals. Lowering or already lowered gates mean stop. Do not attempt to cross until the gates are raised and the lights have stopped flashing.

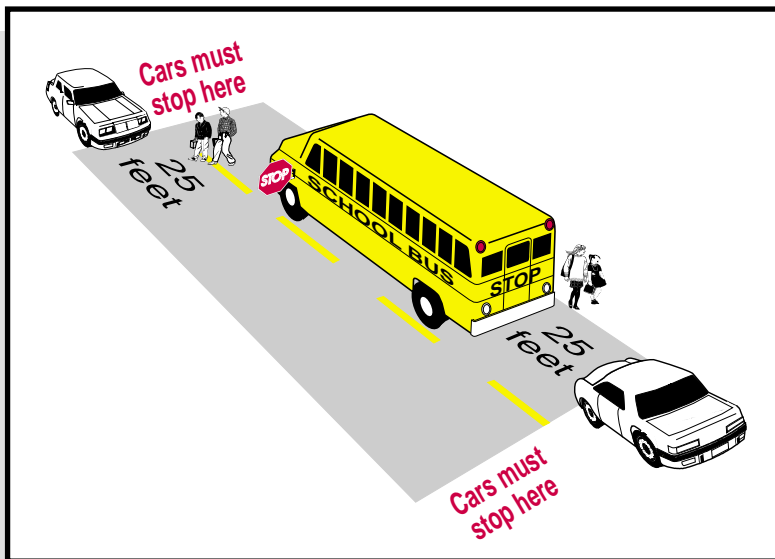
If you are driving behind a vehicle that must stop at a railroad crossing, such as a bus or truck, be prepared to stop. Vehicles that carry explosives or flammables, for example, must stop 15 to 50 feet from the tracks before crossing.

Never drive onto a railroad crossing until you can clear the tracks. If you have started across the tracks, don't stop. If your vehicle stalls on the tracks and you see a train, get out and walk clear of the tracks. Don't try to race a train. A train needs more than a mile to stop when its speed is about 60 mph.

When railroad crossings are not marked with warning signals, expect a train at any time. Stop, look, listen — then proceed.

## Stop for school buses

If you are approaching or overtaking a school bus and it shows a flashing red light, signaling a stop, you must:



- Stop at least 25 feet away. This is required by law if you are on a two-lane road, or on a multi lane highway where lanes are only separated by lines, or on a privately-maintained road.
- Slow down to 10 miles per hour on a dual highway, if you are on the other side of a safety island or raised median.

School buses are equipped with yellow (or amber) and red flashing lights. The yellow (or amber) lights go on before the bus stops, and the red lights go on when it has stopped. Don't depend on these lights if you are driving behind a school bus. They may be malfunctioning.

When the bus stops, you must stop your vehicle 25 feet away (either in front or in back of the bus). Watch for children, then proceed slowly (10 mph) and with caution. If the signals are working, proceed only after they have been turned off.

If a school bus has stopped directly in front of a school to pick up or let off children, you may pass from either direction at a speed of no more than 10 mph.

### Stop for frozen dessert trucks

If you are approaching or overtaking a frozen dessert truck (ice cream type) from either direction and it shows flashing red lights and a stop signal arm, you must:

- Yield the right of way to any person who is crossing the roadway to or from the frozen dessert truck.
- Watch out for children and be prepared to stop;
- Stop, then drive past the truck at a slow speed of no more than 15 miles per hour;

You need not stop on a dual highway if you are on the other side of a safety island or raised median.

### Pull over and stop for emergency vehicles

Police cars, fire trucks and ambulances have sirens and red lights. Private vehicles operated by volunteer fire and rescue squad members (with emergency vehicle identification) responding to an emergency call use blue lights. You must yield to emergency vehicles when you hear a siren or see a flashing red or blue light. Drive over to the extreme right of the roadway and stop. Wait for the vehicle to pass. You should always keep at least 300 feet behind a signaling emergency vehicle. Do not park within 200 feet of a fire department vehicle in service. Do not cross over a fire hose unless an official allows you to do so.



### Using lights

It's the law in New Jersey to turn your headlights on whenever you use windshield wipers. Headlights must also be used between one-half hour after sunset and one-half hour before sunrise, in bad weather (during rain, smoke, fog, snow and ice storms) and whenever visibility is 500 feet or less. Being able to see

clearly while driving is very important. Always make sure your lights are in good working order and clean. Headlights help other drivers see you. Proper use of headlights is vital to safe driving. Parking lights cannot legally be used when headlights are required.

## Bright and dim

Headlights have two sets of beams. They are controlled by a switch or button. The bright beam is for open country driving where there is no traffic in sight. The bright beam helps you see farther ahead.

The dim lights are focused down on the road. They are for city driving and driving in traffic on highways. When you are behind another car or see one coming toward you, dim your lights. Bright beams will shine into the other driver's eyes.

## Other types of lights

Use parking lights only when you leave your car for a short time in a permitted zone. They are helpful to show other drivers the location of your car. Parking lights are required on vehicles parked in areas other than business or residential districts.

Your taillights should turn on at the same time as your headlights and parking lights. They become brighter when you apply the brakes to show you are slowing or stopping. During the day, without headlights, the taillights also turn on as you apply the brakes.

Overhead lights inside the car should only be used briefly (to check a map, for instance) when driving, or to comply with a police officer's request to illuminate the driver's compartment of the vehicle when stopped. If dashboard lights are too bright, they may distract the driver. Keep them dim but still light enough to read the dials.

Spotlights should only be used in emergencies. This also applies to emergency flashers. Spotlights may not be used for driving purposes.



## Parking regulations

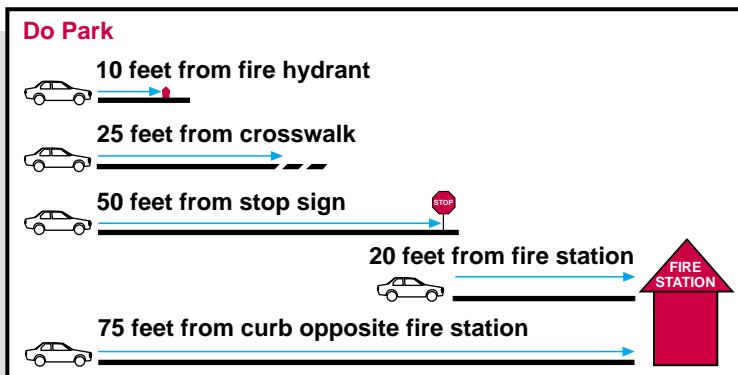
Before you leave your vehicle after parking, check for traffic behind you. Check carefully for bicycles or MOPEDs before opening your car door, since they are more difficult to see than larger vehicles. Many persons have been killed by getting out into traffic. Whenever possible, get out on the curb side.

- Look at all parking signs before parking on city streets. Check for parking time limits.
- Park 6 inches or less from the curb. Parking further away from the curb is illegal. It can cause traffic problems.

In general, do not park where you will block traffic. It is illegal for you to stop or park at any of the following places (except to avoid an accident or unless directed by an officer). Improperly parked vehicles can cause accidents.

## Do not park

- on a crosswalk
- between a safety zone for pedestrians and the adjacent curb, or 20 feet of the end of the safety zone
- near properly marked street construction
- in a space on public or private property marked for vehicle parking for the disabled
- on an interstate highway;
- on a sidewalk;
- in a bus stop zone;
- in front of a public or private driveway;
- within an intersection;
- within 10 feet of a fire hydrant;
- within 25 feet of a crosswalk at an intersection or side line of a street or intersection highway, except at alleys;
- within 50 feet of a railroad crossing;
- within 50 feet of a stop sign;
- within 20 feet of the driveway entrance to any fire station. Within 75 feet on the street opposite a fire station entrance;
- on any bridge, elevated roadway or in any tunnel;
- next to another vehicle parked at the curb (double parking);
- an area where parking is prohibited by municipal ordinance.



**Note:** In case of mechanical trouble or other emergency, stop on the right highway shoulder. Park your car clear of moving traffic.

## **Littering**

Highway litter is a safety hazard and unsightly. There is a fine of up to \$1,000 for throwing dangerous objects from a vehicle onto a roadway. If the vehicle is moving when dropping off litter, you may also lose your license. Rubbish or any loose materials carried in vehicles must be covered to keep them from falling onto the roadway.

## **Special vehicle regulations**

### **Bicycle, roller and inline skates and skateboard regulations**

When you ride a bicycle, roller skate or skateboard you must obey the same traffic laws as motor vehicle drivers. You have the same rights and duties as a motor vehicle driver. Signal all turns and stops, using the standard hand signals. Keep to the right on a road or use a bicycle path. Stay off sidewalks where not permitted. Do not ride, skate or skateboard more than two abreast with others. Never hold on to other vehicles or carry a passenger without an attached seat. For your own safety, make sure you have control at all times.

Bicycles are required to have brakes in good working order. They must have a bell or other signal (but not a siren or whistle) that can be heard 100 feet away. When used after dark, bicycles must have a headlight and a rear red light. The lights should be visible from at least 500 feet away.

For safety when bicycling, skating or skateboarding, wear light-colored or reflective clothing. If you are under 14 years and ride a bicycle, are a passenger on a bicycle, are towed as a passenger by a bicycle, or if you roller skate or skateboard, you must wear a safety helmet approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) or the Snell Memorial Foundation.

More information on bicycles is available in the New Jersey Bicycle Manual. Call (888) 486-3339 toll free in New Jersey or (609) 292-6500 from out of state to receive a copy or ask at any motor vehicle agency.

### **Motorized bicycle (MOPED) regulations**

MOPED operators must wear helmets and obey all New Jersey Motor Vehicle laws and regulations. This means the laws covering motor vehicles, bicycles and MOPEDs.

- Any person who holds a valid driver license or a valid motorcycle license may operate a MOPED.
- Any person 15 years or older who does not hold a valid license must obtain a MOPED license in order to operate a motorized bicycle.

More information on laws covering MOPEDs is contained in the MOPED Manual available at any motor vehicle agency.

## **Motorcycle regulations**

Motorcyclists must obey all traffic laws. Riders must wear a helmet and face or eye protection. It is important that you signal turns and stops. If the motorcycle does not have direction indicators, use the standard hand signals. Always keep within a traffic lane. Do not straddle a lane or ride between lanes of traffic or between traffic and parked cars. Motorcyclists are not permitted to ride more than two abreast in any one traffic lane. Passing regulations are the same as those for passenger cars.

More information and laws are contained in the Motorcycle Manual, available at any motor vehicle agency. MVS will waive the motorcycle road test if the applicant produces a card certified by the Division of Highway Traffic Safety that s/he has completed a valid motorcycle rider course. For information, call (800) 422-3750.

## **Snowmobiles and All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)**

Snowmobiles and ATVs that are operated on public lands, waters or across roads must be registered. The annual costs are:

Residents                      Snowmobile, \$5; ATV, \$10.

Non-Residents                Snowmobile, \$7; ATV, \$12.

You must have proof of liability insurance and a registration certificate with you when operating the vehicle, and you must display the registration numbers on the outside of the vehicle.

These are some specific rules for operating a snowmobile or ATV on public lands or waters or across a public highway. You must be:

- 14 years or older to operate a snowmobile or ATV;
- 16 years or older to operate an ATV with an engine capacity greater than 90 cubic centimeters;
- 18 years or older to operate an ATV without completing an ATV training course. Riders under 18 must carry a certificate of completion. Call (800) 887-2887 for information.

For more information on laws about snowmobiles and ATVs, and the availability of manuals, call (888) 486-3339 toll free in New Jersey or (609) 292-6500 from out of state.